

Health Care Personnel Shortage Task Force

Holly Moore, Ed.D., Chair



Bill Gray, Ph.D., Vice Chair

*Washington State Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board
128 - 10th Avenue, S.W., P.O. Box 43105, Olympia, WA 98504-3105
Telephone: 360/753-5662, Fax: 360/586-5862, Email: wtecb@wtb.wa.gov*

October 19, 2004

Mr. Marty Brown, Director
Office of Financial management
PO Box 43113
Olympia, WA 98504-3133

Dear Mr. Brown:

On behalf of the Health Care Personnel Shortage Task Force we are writing to urge inclusion of a very important item in the 2005-07 Biennial Budget. A state appropriation is requested to develop and maintain information that would assess the composition of Washington's health workforce.

Washington continues to face severe shortages of health care personnel. Employment Security Department's May 2004 job vacancy survey reported 6,548 vacancies in the health care industry, with 3,318 vacancies in registered nursing positions alone. Preparing workers to fill these vacancies is a very effective job and economic development strategy. While progress has been made to reduce the severity of these shortages, further efforts will be hampered unless we collect information on the supply of health workforce practitioners. This budget request is related to the Priorities of Government Results #2 "Improve quality and productivity of our workforce, and #4 "Improve health of Washington citizens," and also relates to economic vitality and safety results.

We have closely examined the health workforce data needs of state agencies, and the current data collected by various state and private organizations. Current state data is adequate to indicate broad shortage occupational areas, but more specific information is necessary in order to target resources where they are most needed. This information is essential for educational planning so that the state can increase capacity where needed and in order to carry out the Task Force's legislative charge to track progress. It is also critical for forecasting future shortages or surpluses in the health workforce, identifying medically underserved areas, and assisting with emergency preparedness.

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Our request for the 2005-07 biennium is \$206,745 (Year 1: Start Up) and \$265,484 (Year 2: Implementation) and ongoing costs of approximately \$175,000 per year, with slightly enhanced costs in Year 5. State agencies have agreed on the essential data elements that need to be collected, and the professional associations are highly supportive of the collection of this information. The Department of Health and the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board are also in agreement regarding the most cost-effective and practical method for annually surveying all licensed health professionals. A detailed proposal of the costs and a briefing document detailing the essential data elements and process are enclosed.

At a time when job opportunities continue to be limited, the health care industry is providing high-wage opportunities. We must ensure we have adequate staff to serve the health care needs of our state. Developing an accurate picture of the health workforce is critical to guide the most cost-effective workforce planning and to eliminate health care personnel shortages. We urge your serious consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Holly Moore
Health Care Personnel Shortage Task
Force Chair
President, Shoreline Community College

William Gray
Health Care Personnel Shortage Task
Force Vice Chair
Washington State University

Mary C. Selecky
Secretary
Department of Health

Ellen O'Brien Saunders
Executive Director
Workforce Training and Education
Coordinating Board

Enclosures

cc: Health Care Personnel Shortage Task Force Members
Elise Grees
Jennifer Hamilton
Debora Merle
Michelle Needham
Marc Webster